An Exploratory Study on News Consumption Habits and Media Credibility among Youths in Vijayapura District

Synopsis of the Thesis to be submitted to the Karnataka State Akkamahadevi Women University, Vijayapura for the award of the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN

JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION

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VIJAYAPUR, KARNATAKA

2025

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1. Introduction:

The media landscape in Karnataka, as in many other regions, has witnessed significant transformations over the past decade. Historically, the primary sources of news for most residents were newspapers, television, and radio. These traditional media outlets were regarded as the cornerstone of public information dissemination, shaping public opinion and informing the citizenry. However, the advent of the internet and the rapid proliferation of digital media platforms have revolutionized the way news is consumed and perceived.

The rise of digital media has introduced new dynamics in news consumption habits. Online news portals, social media platforms, blogs, and video streaming services now compete with traditional media, providing instant access to information. This shift has not only altered the frequency and manner in which people consume news but has also raised critical questions about the credibility and trustworthiness of different media sources.

In today's fast-paced digital era, people have access to an unprecedented amount of information at their fingertips. This democratization of information has empowered individuals to stay informed about global and local events. However, it has also posed significant challenges. The abundance of information, coupled with the rapid spread of fake news and misinformation, particularly on social media, has complicated the media Credibility landscape. Discerning accurate information from unreliable content has become increasingly difficult, affecting the Credibility residents place in various media platforms.

Understanding news consumption habits and media Credibility in Karnataka is essential for several reasons. It provides insights into how residents navigate through the diverse media environment, identifies the predominant sources of news, and assesses the level of Credibility in these sources. Furthermore, it explores the factors influencing media Credibility and news consumption patterns, contributing to a more informed and engaged citizenry.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Media Consumption Trends

The historical landscape of news consumption in Karnataka has been predominantly shaped by traditional media, such as newspapers, television, and radio. For decades, newspapers like "Vijaya Karnataka," "Prajavani," and "Kannada Prabha" have been the cornerstone of daily news consumption, offering in-depth coverage of local, national, and international events. Television channels, including "Udaya TV," "TV9 Kannada," and "Public TV," have been pivotal in delivering news, particularly through prime-time broadcasts, which have become ritualistic in many households. Radio, though less dominant in the urban context, has maintained its presence, particularly in rural areas, through channels like "Akashvani" (All India Radio).

Research by Rao (2015) highlights that until the early 2000s, newspapers enjoyed unparalleled credibility and readership, with daily morning routines often centered around reading the newspaper over tea. The advent of television news channels in the late 1990s introduced a new dynamic, offering real-time news coverage and becoming a major source of information for a large segment of the population.

The transition from traditional to digital media in Karnataka mirrors global trends, marked by increased internet penetration and the advent of smartphones. A report by the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI, 2020) notes that Karnataka has one of the highest internet penetration rates in India, which has significantly altered news consumption patterns. Digital news platforms, such as "Karnataka News," "News Karnataka," and various online versions of traditional newspapers, have emerged as key players in the media landscape.

The proliferation of social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp has further revolutionized news dissemination and consumption. According to a study by Joshi and Srinivas (2018), approximately 70% of internet users in Karnataka consume news primarily through digital platforms, with a notable shift among younger demographics. This transition is attributed to the convenience, immediacy, and interactive nature of digital media, which contrasts with the more passive consumption associated with traditional media.

2.2 Media Trust

Media Credibility refers to the level of confidence that audiences place in the accuracy, fairness, and reliability of information provided by media sources. According to Tsfati and Ariely (2014), media Credibility is a crucial component of a functioning democracy, as it influences public opinion, civic engagement, and the overall Credibility in societal institutions. High levels of media Credibility are associated with a well-informed public, capable of making educated decisions on political, social, and economic matters.

The importance of media Credibility cannot be overstated, particularly in an era marked by information overload and rampant misinformation. As Kovach and Rosenstiel (2014) argue, media Credibility ensures that audiences can discern factual information from falsehoods, thereby maintaining the integrity of public discourse and democratic processes.

Several factors influence media trust, including perceived credibility, transparency, accountability, and the perceived objectivity of the news source. A study by Coleman and McCombs (2007) suggests that the credibility of a news outlet is a significant determinant of media trust, shaped by factors such as accuracy, fairness, and impartiality in reporting.

Transparency and accountability also play critical roles. Media outlets that are transparent about their sources, funding, and editorial processes tend to be more trusted by their audiences (Craft, Ashley, & Maksl, 2017). Additionally, the perceived bias of a news source can significantly impact Credibility levels. A survey by the Pew Research Center (2019) found that audiences are more likely to Credibility media outlets that they perceive as objective and balanced in their reporting.

2.3 Digital Media and Misinformation

The rise of digital media has brought numerous benefits, including greater accessibility to information, increased speed of news dissemination, and enhanced interactivity. However, it has also introduced several challenges, particularly related to the credibility and accuracy of information. As digital platforms prioritize speed and engagement, the verification of information often takes a backseat, leading to the rapid spread of misinformation.

Digital media's algorithm-driven content distribution also contributes to the problem. Algorithms designed to maximize user engagement can create echo chambers, where users are exposed primarily to information that aligns with their pre-existing beliefs (Pariser, 2011). This phenomenon, known as the "filter bubble," can exacerbate the spread of misinformation and polarize public opinion.

The prevalence of fake news—deliberately false or misleading information spread via digital platforms—has severely impacted media trust. Research by Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) indicates that the spread of fake news during significant events, such as elections, can erode public Credibility in both digital and traditional media. In Karnataka, the 2018 state elections saw a significant influx of fake news on social media, prompting concerns about its impact on the democratic process (Bharali & Goswami, 2018).

The challenge of fake news underscores the need for media literacy and critical thinking skills among news consumers. Efforts to combat misinformation, such as fact-checking initiatives and digital literacy programs, are essential to restoring and maintaining media Credibility(Lewandowsky, Ecker, & Cook, 2017).

1.3 Need for the Study:

The necessity to understand news consumption patterns and media Credibility in Karnataka is driven by several critical factors. Firstly, the significant shift from traditional to digital media requires a comprehensive analysis of current news consumption habits. As digital platforms become more prevalent, understanding these shifts can help traditional media outlets adapt their strategies to remain relevant and trustworthy in the digital age.

Secondly, the pervasive issue of fake news and misinformation, particularly on social media, has raised concerns about the credibility of news sources. Residents who rely heavily on digital platforms face challenges in discerning accurate information from unreliable content. This situation necessitates a thorough investigation into the factors influencing media Credibility and the perceived credibility of different media sources.

Thirdly, media Credibility is fundamental to an informed and engaged citizenry. Trustworthy media ensures that the public receives accurate information, which is crucial for making informed decisions in a democratic society. By exploring the news consumption habits and Credibility levels across various media platforms, this study aims to provide valuable insights for media practitioners, policymakers, and educators to enhance media credibility and foster media literacy.

Additionally, examining demographic variations in media consumption and Credibility is relevant to understanding how different groups within Karnataka interact with news media. Factors such as age, education, occupation, and urban/rural residence can influence news consumption habits and Credibility levels. Identifying specific demographic groups that are more susceptible to misinformation and fake news can help tailor media literacy initiatives and improve the overall quality of information dissemination.

Ultimately, this study seeks to contribute to a more informed, engaged, and media-literate population in Karnataka. By addressing the following objectives, it aims to promote a healthy and trustworthy media environment that can effectively serve the informational needs of its residents.

1.4 Statement of the Problem:

An Exploratory Study on News Consumption Habits and Media Credibility in Karnataka

1.5 Objectives:

1. To identify the predominant sources of news.
2. To understand the frequency and patterns of news consumption.
3. To assess the level of Credibility in various media platforms, including newspapers, television, radio, and digital media.
4. To examine the factors influencing media Credibility and news consumption habits.
5. To explore the impact of digital media on traditional news sources.
6. To evaluate the role of social media in news dissemination and trust.

7. To understand the influence of demographic factors on news consumption and media trust.
8. To propose recommendations for improving media Credibility and promoting accurate news consumption.

The rapid transformation of the media landscape in Karnataka underscores the need for a comprehensive study on news consumption habits and media trust. As digital media continues to grow in prominence, understanding the shifting patterns of news consumption and the factors influencing media Credibility becomes increasingly important. This study aims to provide valuable insights into the predominant news sources, frequency, and patterns of news consumption, and the Credibility levels across various media platforms.

By examining the impact of digital media on traditional news sources, the role of social media in news dissemination, and the demographic influences on news consumption and media trust, this study seeks to contribute to a more informed, engaged, and media-literate population in Karnataka. The findings will offer actionable recommendations for media practitioners, policymakers, and educators to enhance media credibility, foster media literacy, and promote accurate news consumption.

In an era where information is abundant yet often unreliable, ensuring that residents of Karnataka have access to trustworthy and accurate news is paramount. This study aims to illuminate the complexities of the current media environment and provide a roadmap for building a healthier, more trustworthy media ecosystem in Karnataka.

1.6 Theoretical Perspectives:

To understand news consumption habits and media Credibility in Karnataka, this study employs several theoretical perspectives that offer insights into media behavior, Credibility formation, and the influence of digital transformation.

1. **Uses and Gratifications Theory:**
    - This theory posits that individuals actively seek out media that fulfill their specific needs and desires. It helps explain why residents of Karnataka choose particular

media platforms over others. By analyzing the motivations behind media use, such as information, entertainment, social interaction, or escapism, this study can identify the factors driving news consumption habits.

2. **Agenda-Setting Theory:**
    - This theory posits that the media doesn't tell people what to think, but rather what to think about, by selecting and emphasizing certain issues. Understanding how media outlets in Karnataka set the public agenda and the subsequent impact on Credibility and news consumption patterns is crucial. This theory aids in examining the relationship between media coverage and the perceived importance of issues among residents.
3. **Digital Divide Theory:**
    - This theory addresses the gap between those who have access to digital technologies and those who do not. In Karnataka, analyzing the digital divide can provide insights into how access to digital media affects news consumption habits and media trust, particularly across different demographic groups such as urban vs. rural residents.
4. **Credibility and Credibility Theories:**
    - These theories explore the factors that influence Credibility in media sources, including perceived expertise, reliability, and objectivity. By applying these theories, the study can assess how factors like media transparency, accountability, and the prevalence of fake news affect the Credibility levels in different media platforms in Karnataka.

By integrating these theoretical perspectives, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics shaping news consumption habits and media Credibility in Karnataka. These theories will guide the research in identifying key factors influencing media behavior and trust, ultimately contributing to the development of effective strategies to enhance media credibility and promote accurate news consumption.

1.7 Research Design

Research Approach

This study employs a mixed-method approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of news consumption habits and media Credibility in Karnataka. This approach allows for a robust analysis by capturing numerical data through surveys and in-depth insights through interviews.

Quantitative Component

The quantitative component consists of a structured questionnaire designed to gather detailed data on various aspects of news consumption and media trust. The questionnaire includes the following sections:

- **Demographics**: Questions about age, gender, education, occupation, and urban/rural residence to identify demographic patterns.
- **News Consumption Habits**: Queries about the frequency of news consumption, preferred times for news consumption, and platforms used for accessing news.
- **Preferred News Sources**: Identification of primary news sources, such as newspapers, television, radio, and digital media, and preferences among specific channels or websites.
- **Frequency of News Consumption**: Questions to determine how often respondents consume news from various media platforms.
- **Credibilityin Media**: Items to assess Credibilitylevels in different media platforms, exploring perceptions of credibility, transparency, and bias.

Sampling

To ensure a representative sample of Karnataka's diverse population, the following sampling strategy is adopted:

- **Sample Size**: 960 respondents.
- **Sampling Method**: Stratified random sampling is used to ensure proportional representation of different demographic groups, including age, gender, education level, occupation, and urban/rural residence. This method allows for accurate representation and generalization of the findings to the

Qualitative Component

The qualitative component involves semi-structured interviews to gather in-depth insights into personal experiences, attitudes, and perceptions regarding news consumption and media trust. The interview guide includes:

- **Personal News Consumption Habits**: Questions about how respondents access news, the frequency and timing of their news consumption, and the reasons behind their choices.
- **Reasons for Credibility or DisCredibility in Media**: Exploring factors that influence respondents' Credibility in various media platforms, including personal experiences, perceived biases, and perceived transparency and accountability of media sources.
- **Perceptions of Media Credibility**: In-depth discussions on how respondents perceive the credibility of different media platforms and their criteria for judging the reliability of news sources.

The mixed-method research design outlined above is intended to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of news consumption habits and media Credibility in Karnataka. By integrating quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews, this study aims to capture both broad trends and detailed personal insights, ensuring a holistic analysis that can inform media practitioners, policymakers, and educators in fostering a more informed and trust-based media environment.

1.8 Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it addresses the evolving news consumption habits and media Credibility in Karnataka, a region experiencing rapid digital media growth. By identifying predominant news sources, assessing Credibility levels, and examining demographic influences, this research provides critical insights for media practitioners, policymakers, and educators. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for enhancing media credibility, combating misinformation, and promoting media literacy. Ultimately, the study aims to contribute to a more informed and engaged citizenry, ensuring that residents have access to trustworthy and accurate news, thereby fostering a healthier media environment in Karnataka.

1.9 Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. Firstly, the research is geographically confined to Karnataka, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions in India or beyond, where media consumption habits and Credibility dynamics may differ significantly. Secondly, the reliance on self-reported data may introduce biases, as respondents might not accurately recall their news consumption patterns or Credibility levels. Additionally, the study may not fully capture the rapidly evolving digital media landscape, as new platforms and trends can emerge quickly, affecting media habits and Credibility perceptions. The demographic factors explored may also be limited, potentially overlooking nuanced variations within subgroups. Lastly, due to time and resource constraints, the sample size may not be sufficiently large to represent the diverse population of Karnataka accurately, which could affect the robustness of the findings and their implications for media practitioners and policymakers.

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